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E.O. 12065: N/A
TAGS: PGOV AKB BQG
SUBJECT: (U) RUDOLF HESS OR AN IMPOSTER?

1. (LOU) SUMMARY: FORMER BRITISH ARMY DOCTOR, HUGH THOMAS, HAS REPORTED HIS PERSONAL CONCLUSION THAT PRISONER NOW HELD IN SPANDAU IS NOT RPT NOT RUDOLF HESS. FULL THOMAS ALLEGATIONS ARE NOT YET KNOWN AND WILL BE CONTAINED IN HIS BOOK WHICH IS BEING SERIALIZED IN BRITISH SUNDAY TELEGRAPH. THOMAS' MAIN CLAIM IS THAT IT WAS NOT HESS WHO FLEW TO SCOTLAND IN 1941. THOMAS' STORY HAS BEEN MET WITH SKEPTICISM IN BERLIN AND HAS BEEN PUBLICLY REFUTED BY EUGENE BIRD, A FORMER U.S. MILITARY OFFICER AND U.S. GOVERNOR OF SPANDAU WHO HAS WRITTEN HIS OWN BOOK ABOUT HESS. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) FOLLOWING IS AP REPORT DATELINE LONDON 12 APRIL CONCERNING THOMAS' ALLEGATIONS:

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BEGIN TEXT

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THE GERMAN WHO FLEW TO BRITAIN IN WORLD WAR II CLAIMING TO BE HITLER'S DEPUTY, RUDOLF HESS, AND IS NOW HELD IN BERLIN'S SPANDAU PRISON IS AN IMPOSTER, SAYS A BOOK TO BE PUBLISHED HERE NEXT MONTH.

THE EXTRAORDINARY CLAIM IS MADE BY HUGH THOMAS, A FORMER SENIOR MILITARY SURGEON IN THE BRITISH ARMY WHO IN 1973 WAS THE BRITISH MEMBER OF THE FOUR-NATION MEDICAL TEAM LOOKING AFTER THE SPANDAU PRISONER.

THOMAS, 43, IS NOW SENIOR SURGEON AT THE PRINCE CHARLES HOSPITAL IN MERTHYR TYDFIL IN WALES. HIS BOOK, TO BE SERIALIZED IN THE RESPECTED BRITISH NEWSPAPER THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH STARTING SUNDAY, IS CALLED THE MURDER OF RUDOLF HESS.

HE SAYS HIS CALIM IS BASED ON THE DISCOVERY AFTER EXAMINING THE PRISONER THAT SOME OF HIS PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS DID NOT MATCH UP WITH PAST MEDICAL RECORDS OF HESS, AND ON FIVE SUBSEQUENT YEARS OF RE-SEARCH.

THE RESEARCH, HE SAYS, INVOLVED STUDYING OFFICIAL RECORDS ON THE PRISONER DURING AND AFTER THE WAR AND INTERVIEWING HESS' WIFE ILSE AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO KNEW HIM BOFORE 1941.

THE OFFICIAL VERSION OF THE STORY IS THAT HESS LANDED IN SCOTLAND AND BY PARACHUTE ON MAY 10, 1941, SEEKING TALKS WITH BRITIAIN'S WARTIME GOVERNMENT LED BY WINSTON CHURCHILL IN A BID TO HALT THE WAR BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.
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HE WAS CAPTURED, THE BRITISH REFUSED TO NEGOTIATE WITH HIM, AND AFTER THE VICTORY OF THE ALLIES OVER GERMANY IN 1945 HE WAS SENTENCED IN 1947 AT THE NUREMBERG WAR TRIALS.

HE WAS SENT AS A WAR CRIMINAL TO SPANDAU PRISON, WHICH IS JOINTLY ADMINISTERED BY BRITAIN, FRANCE, THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, AND NAOW AT THE AGE OF 85 REMAINS THE SOLE PRISONER THERE.

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DESPITE NUMEROUS PLEAS FROM THE WEST THAT HE SHOULD BE RELEASED ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, THE SOVIETS INSIST HE REMAINS IN SPANDAU UNTIL HE DIES.

"WHO THE PRISONER IS, I DON'T KNOW," THOMAS SAID, "WHAT ID DO KNOW IS THAT HE CANNOT BE HESS." HE ADDED: "IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT A SURGEON OF INTERNATION REPUTE, WITH THE REQUISIT EXPERIENCE, SHOULD EXAMIN THE PRISONER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE."

TO BACK UP HIS ASSERTIONS, THOMAS ASKS WHY CHURCHILL DID NOT ALLOW ANY PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PRISONER TO BE TAKEN AFTER HE LANDED IN SCOTLAND, WHY THE

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PRISONER FEIGNED AMNESIA THROUGHOUT HIS IMPRISON-
MENT IN BRITAIN AND WHY HE REFUSED A VISIT FROM ILSE
HESS UNTIL 28 YEARS AFTER HE HAD BEEN CAPTURED.

OPINION IN BRITAIN IS SHARPLY DIVIDED OVER THOMAS'
CLAIMS.

PROFESSOR HUGH TREVOR-ROPER, AN HISTORIAN AND FORMER
SENIOR WARTIME ARMY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER WHO INVESTIGATED
THE DEATH OF HITLER SAID: "THIS IS ABSOLUTE RUBBISH.
I HAVE PLENTY OF EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT IT IS WRONG."

BUT THE HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR DAME REBECCA WEST SAID
THOMAS' ASSERTION BEGIN" "THE UNRAVELLING OF THE GREATEST
MYSTERY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR."

LAWMAKER WILLIAM MOLLOY SAID THURSDAY HE DID NOT
BELIEVE THOMAS' CLAIMS AND WANTS FOREIGN SECRETARY
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DAVID OWEN OFFICIALLY TO CONFIRM THAT THE SPANDAU
PRISONER IS HESS.

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MOLLOY TOLD REPORTS: "IT MUST BE OBVIOUS THAT THE PRISONER IS HESS BECAUSE HIS CLOSE RELATIVES AND FRIENDS VISIT HIM FROM TIME TO TIME. BUT THIS LATEST STORY MUST CAST DOUBTS IN SOME PEOPLE'S MINDS. THAT IS WHY I ASK DR. OWEN, AND THE RELEVANT MINISTERS IN FRANCE, THE UNITED STATES AND THE U.S.S.R. TO STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT THE PRISONER IS HESS."
END TEXT

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